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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#) [KMDR](#)

SUBJECT: AL-BAYYNA JOURNALISTS ARGUE IN SUPPORT OF
CONSTITUTION AND MILITIAS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Journalists from Al-Bayyna, a major Shia newspaper published by the Hezbollah Movement in Iraq, told PolOff that they supported the draft constitution. The best option for Shia, the journalists argued, would be to join together in several Shia regions and work to build a stable Iraq. The journalists said they also supported Shia militias that "keep the peace" as long as Coalition Forces prove incapable of protecting Iraqis. PolOff countered that the best way to secure Iraq would be to disband all militias and give full support to Iraqi Police (IP) and Security Forces (ISF). END SUMMARY.

Supporters of the Constitution...

2. (C) On October 6, Jafar al Awachy, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Al-Bayyna, and reporter Nadeem Hussein al Ameer told PolOff that their newspaper (Al-Bayyna) was in favor of the draft constitution. The Shia journalists said that while the draft was not a perfect document, it would guarantee the rights of all Iraqis. The journalists accepted that the draft constitution would be a living document and could be amended later if necessary, just like the U.S. Constitution.

...But Also of Militias

3. (C) Jafar and Nadeem argued that weakness of the Ministries of Interior and Defense have made the Shia militias necessary. They further argued that these militia groups were inherently peaceful as the Shia are fully engaged in the political process. In contrast, they said Sunni Arab militias targeted innocent civilians and MNF-I forces, and therefore should be disbanded and their members arrested. The journalists favored the integration of Shia militias into Iraqi Police (IP) and Security Forces (ISF) in the interest of Iraqi security. PolOff countered that the best way to secure Iraq would be to disband all militias and give full support to IP and ISF.

Favoring Several Regions

4. (C) Jafar and Nadeem said that if all the Shia-majority provinces were to form a single region, various groups would inevitably try to dominate the new entity. The journalists said this would cause much internecine strife within the Shia community. At the same time, they argued that Iraqi Shia are loyal Arabs who follow different ideologies than Iranian Shia, who are servants of Iran. Iraqi Shia, they insisted, are patriotic citizens of Iraq.

6. (C) COMMENT: Al-Bayyna newspaper has an Iraqi nationalist tone to many of its editorials. It is a popular and influential newspaper not only in Baghdad, but in southern Iraq as well. The statements of the newspaper's staff provide insight into the basis of the editorial views many Shia read. END COMMENT.
Khalilzad